

Judaean-Christian ethical code. He said that if we do not do that we will lose our very freedom. I think he is right on.

As legislators we must always be sure that our laws are based on the best available evidence. That is the purpose of sending this bill to committee. Also we must be sure that they are in harmony with the directions of the Judaean-Christian ethical code.

Again I should like to quote from Robert H. Jackson who said that we should move to redress the blight of the record on our era and return in law-making to nothing less than a recovery of those basic principles of jurisprudence which are the assumptions of our civilization. I hope the bill will go to committee.

**Mrs. Margaret Mitchell (Vancouver East):** Mr. Speaker, I believe that Bill C-206 is a retrogressive step, contrary to the official policy of all political parties in this House, contrary to the opinions of most Canadians, contrary to the realistic real-life situations in the real world which face many women, and indeed, many men today in Canada.

If it is passed, it will deny human rights. My friends spoke about human rights, but what about the rights of women to decide what is best for them in their particular situation? It will not prevent abortions or unwanted pregnancies. Indeed, it will force an increase in illegal, dangerous backstreet abortions. If passed, it will bring heartbreak to many people, particularly families who may have teenage daughters who are in a situation of unwanted pregnancy and who are faced with requiring some choice in planning their future.

The bill distorts the concepts of health, as was pointed out by the last speaker. It contravenes the opinions of most experienced medical practitioners. It ignores the very strong, well-informed and well-documented persistent positions of women's groups across the country. After all, it is a question facing women primarily. Certainly it would be opposed by most professional counsellors who have worked with young people, women, families, husbands and male partners who are involved in situations where there are unwanted pregnancies. In my opinion it is in conflict with basic human rights.

As I read the aims of this bill, it is to restrict the option of legal abortions to only very limited, narrowly-defined situations involving actual physical or acute mental danger. This seems to go completely in the reverse trend to what happened in Canada in the last ten or 15 years. Before 1967 all abortions were a criminal offence, but this did not stop abortions. There were abortions, deaths, and very inhumane practices. Abortions have been with us always.

Since 1967 the New Democratic Party approved limited legal abortions. In 1969 the Liberals introduced legislation in the House, and abortions were approved within certain stipulations. The abortion had to be performed by a qualified physician in an accredited hospital. The operation had to be approved by a three-person therapeutic abortion committee which would decide whether the pregnancy would or would not be likely to endanger the woman's life and health. Incidentally, the practitioner who performs the operation could not be a

### *Abortion*

member of the committee. In 1970 the Liberal party endorsed the removal of abortion from the Criminal Code and recommended that it be the personal and private decision of the woman and her doctor. In 1974 the Conservative party voted to remove abortion from the Criminal Code.

Now we have abortions which are available under very limited situations. Certainly I do not see why people who do not want the availability of abortions extended should have very much concern. They are very, very limited under the present situation. They are done with medical approval. They are available with medical approval. Incidentally, there is no abortion on demand, for those who are concerned about liberalizing it to that degree. Individual cases are reviewed. It gives a woman, her partner, doctor, and perhaps her family, a chance to look at all alternatives. Counselling is available because it is acceptable to talk to people about a possible abortion. Also the other options of family planning, adoption and so on, are available to people. However, it is limited to few hospitals and to the situations under which abortions are approved.

I know this is a very emotional topic. Personally I do not advocate abortion as a desirable situation. I think we should be very clear about this. Abortion, certainly under this bill, is not being advocated as a method of birth control. If I were in the situation, I am not even sure I would have an abortion. However, if I found myself in the situation that many women are in, a real life situation, perhaps I would look at this quite differently.

● (1650)

I also respect the different views of people in this House, throughout this country and, indeed, those in my own party, because there is a different point of view on this question. Some people oppose abortion on religious grounds as a matter of conscience. They have a right to their personal views and, of course, a right to their religious views.

However, not one of us in a democracy has the right to impose our views on others. We have no right to tell a woman who is pressured by many problems because of an impossible life situation, a woman who cannot care for her child perhaps because of health problems, and I use that term in its broadest sense, and maybe in a situation in which she would damage an unwanted child, or the child would be neglected and perhaps abused, that she cannot consider an abortion, or that it is not her right to make the decision.

There are many misconceptions about the kind of jargon we use. For instance, freedom of choice does not mean that we are necessarily in favour of abortion, or that a woman will decide in favour of an abortion in her own situation. Many people are very much opposed to abortion, and certainly would be opposed to it as a method of birth control in Canada. Freedom of choice means in this case that a woman should not be pressured against her will to bear a child, nor indeed should she be pressured against her will to have an abortion. It is the individual human right of a woman to have the freedom to decide whether to continue with an unplanned and undesirable